

The Captain takes a new tack

Clyde Sanger

Among the neat-suited diplomats and slightly tired lawyers who pace the corridors and cluster in committee-rooms of the United Nations in Geneva and New York, Edgar Gold makes a striking figure. He has never been a diplomat and, although he is now a law professor, he came to that position only recently and by a curious route. Rather, with clipped beard and blue eyes, a breezy style fuelling a big frame over 6 ft 3 in height, he looks like a legendary sea-captain under full steam.

Which is not too surprising, because for 16 years he indeed steamed round the world's oceans in the merchant ships of half-a-dozen countries, starting as a cadet fresh out of an Australian high school. It has been a lengthy voyage from those first visits to Pacific islands to his present moorings in Halifax, where he is helping establish the Dalhousie Institute of Ocean Studies, or to New York's Turtle Bay, where he was keeping a sharp eye in May on the latest round of the Law of the Sea Conference. But there is probably more logic and direction — and drive — in that life's journey than there is in the meanderings of most of us.

When he came into the sights of IDRC telescopes in 1973, he was Captain Edgar Gold and he was working, in any spare time he had, on an M.A. thesis on German legal philosophy, which he has yet to complete. What he really wanted to do was to study marine policy in various African and Asian countries, and an IDRC Research Associate award helped him on his way for two years.

He had plenty of qualifications by then. After getting his Second Mate's papers in Sydney, he had switched to the British merchant marine and progressed up to Master. Along the way he had been a chief officer on Zimlines and, because Israel had technical assistance programs with African states, he had spent five years with the shipping lines of Ghana. Ghana's Black Star line he remembers with respect: the handsome harbour of Tema that Kwame Nkrumah built, the modern ships and the well trained crews. He spent another year working out of Port Sudan where conditions were tougher: the heat was oppressive and the Sudanese were struggling in those days with third-hand tonnage and equivalent crews. Things have improved since, he adds.



Edgar Gold: from ship's captain to lawyer and diplomat.

On one trip he steamed into Halifax with a cargo of Jaffa oranges and met a medical student called Judith Hammerling. They were married later, and for two years she sailed with him as ship's doctor. One of his vessels, the *Lakhish*, had a crew of 30 drawn from 12 nationalities not so unusual, he says, since 70 percent of the Israeli marine were foreigners.

Where to go, having done all this by 33? He was getting tired of being "a sophisticated ship's chauffeur" and wanted to "go and influence decisions". Working for developing countries, he saw how the old maritime powers squeezed them on freight rates and other shipping rules. He thought he would learn some law, while his wife did a residency as a psychiatrist.

It took longer than the year for which he had budgeted. He had first to get a B.A. (in political science and languages) and then an LL.B. at Dalhousie. But this gave him time to learn at first-hand about marine oil pollution problems, as clerk to Mr. Justice Hart in the 1970-71 commission of inquiry into the incident of the tanker *Arrow*, which spilt its oil around Chedabucto Bay after running aground. Four years later, when he was observing the Law of the Sea Conference session in Caracas and word came that the tanker *Metulla* was aground and spilling 60,000 tons in the Straits of Magellan, he could tell Latin American delegates what that really meant.

In his two years as a Research Associate, he visited eight countries in Africa and five in Asia and attended the Caracas and Geneva sessions of the Law of the Sea Conference. He also attended a conference in November 1973 convened by the Inter-Governmental Maritime Consultative Organization (IMCO) at which representatives of 79 countries discussed problems of marine pollution. He based himself at Cardiff, where the University of Wales Institute of Science and Technology was building up a centre for research and training in port and transport administration.

He found that African countries were just beginning to get nervous about the state of their coastal waters. Previously pollution had been regarded as "another rich man's thing we don't have to worry about". But Kenya, he discovered, was starting to fear for its beautiful coastline and to trace the pollution back, mostly to the tourist hotels and shoreline settlements that dumped their waste in the ocean. Kenya, and the West African states too, began to size up the hazards from all the coastal shipping.

He is convinced that, despite the slowness of progress at Caracas and Geneva and New York, there will be some sort of Law of the Sea treaty within a couple of years. So, although the team at Dalhousie who are planning the Institute of Ocean Studies (DIOS) put some immediate emphasis on conference diplomacy studies, the study of ocean resource management rates higher in their longer-term plans.

The Institute is a multidisciplinary effort, drawing in the Faculties of Law and of Administrative Studies, and the Departments of Economics, Political Science and Oceanography of the University. As the list implies, it will take a broad approach to marine policies, complementing Cardiff's concentration on administration and an emphasis on fisheries being developed at the new marine policy centre in Seattle. Each centre will carry out research, and offer training courses, that are designed to benefit developing countries. Dalhousie's Centre for African Studies may tend to tilt some of the work towards that continent, but a balance will be kept by another leading spirit in the Faculty of Law and DIOS, Professor Doug Johnston, whose scholarship has centred on Asia. And in September, when DIOS is launched, the first course will probably be for biologists from the Caribbean.

Many hands are helping launch the institute, and Edgar Gold would not claim his was giving it the biggest push. Nevertheless, one might marvel at what extraordinary results followed from the shipment to Halifax, years ago before anybody was talking about 200-mile economic zones, of an apparently ordinary cargo of Jaffa oranges. □